

CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

186 in the village, whom they regarded as inferior not only because they had been conquered, but because they disliked and despised their way of living. This sense of separateness from and of superiority to the non-Ngoni elements in the villages had its counterpart in the close ties which existed with Ngoni families in other villages. These ties were reinforced socially by 'dynastic' or inter-clan marriages, and politically through the hierarchy of courts and officials leading up to the Paramount's court and entourage.

565 The Ngoni aristocracy endeavoured to maintain their traditional ways of living and of bringing up their children in the face of changes creeping in from the non-Ngoni elements in the village, as well as from external European influences. The maintenance of Ngoni ways of living and cultural patterns of behaviour depended on three main elements in village society. One was the degree of integration between the Ngoni men in their house groups and in village society as a whole. This was most evident in chiefs' villages, and in the villages belonging to the heads of clans. The second element was the number of wives of true Ngoni families who had married into the village, thus combining the influence of husband and wife, or rather of father and mother, in bringing up children on the Ngoni pattern. The third element was the number and influence of senior women of Ngoni families, either wives of older men in the village, or widows of former leaders. This senior women's group, many of whom were addressed as 'mother' by the Ngoni fathers of young families, were a formidable force in maintaining tradition, by advising their sons, coercing their daughters-in-law, and holding on to their authority at every stage of the children's development.

Life in two Ngoni villages

121 I am going briefly to sketch in, as a general background for the following chapters, the main features of two villages, in one of which I lived for several months, in the other for a few weeks.

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843 little children. They are not able to hear those things which
593 belong to pregnancy.' The men on their part accepted the
562 role of being ignorant of what was coming, though they were
generally aware of it. It was an elaborate piece of role-play-
ing, standardized by custom, emphasizing the separation of
the men's and women's worlds in Ngoni life, and giving
control and authority into the experienced hands of the
senior women.

843 The Ngoni culture pattern forbade the wife to tell her
606 mother-in-law herself about her condition. She had, as so
572 often in the Ngoni pattern, to approach first a friend who
was her confidante, who might be another young wife or a
helper in the household. This friend had to tell her mother-
in-law, the future paternal grandmother of the baby, who
was destined to play a big part in the child's upbringing.

843 During the months of pregnancy a Ngoni woman carried
152 on with her normal work in the household, including cooking
for her husband. If she feared a miscarriage, and suffered
from what was called 'a shaking inside', she stayed quietly
in the hut, and, saying that she had a headache, asked her
husband to call her friend. Then the friend told the mother-
in-law who sent for a 'doctor' to bring medicines 'to make
the inside not shake'. A young Ngoni woman did not expect
to have miscarriages, and feared that her husband's relatives
would blame her home for not giving her enough food be-
fore marriage to make her strong and healthy in child-
bearing.

The fear of invidious comparisons with her own home and
upbringing also operated when the wife felt herself near to
labour. She would keep on working up to the last minute,
for if she told her friend that her time was come, and the
friend summoned the senior women, they came to examine
her. Should they find on examination that she was not about
to deliver, they looked at her and said, 'What are you afraid
of? Did you call us for fear?' The young wife was ashamed
of being thought fearful, both for her own reputation and

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854 house was still killed and eaten. The cloth came out of the
[432] store of cloth bought when cattle were sold, and kept in the
hut of the senior woman of the father's house.

Visit to the mother's home

593 If, as was always the case in earlier days, the mother of the
574 new baby had come from a distant village, she did not see
her own mother or her relatives, and they did not see the
child until it was several weeks old, and considered by the
senior women strong enough to undertake a journey. Then
a visit involving much ceremony took place, for the wife's
● [606] mother-in-law headed the party. The stiff and formal rela-
tions between the two sets of 'in-laws' had been eased
slightly through the series of feasts and exchanges which
preceded and followed the marriage ceremony. Face-to-face
[571] intercourse was, however, still very formal between the two
families, and this first visit with the grandchild was in one
sense an act of condescension on the part of the husband's
family, since the child belonged to them. It was also a human
and natural recognition of the eagerness of the young mother
to see her own mother and display her child. Word was sent
in advance by a messenger from the husband's village to
announce the visit, so that the wife's family could make due
preparation.

The main object of this visit was, in the Ngoni phrase, 'to
show the child at its mother's home'. The young mother and
[606] baby, with her mother-in-law in the place of honour, sat
outside the big house of the girl's father's family. Her father
and his male relatives came to salute the child and to give it
[431] presents of beads, and in modern times small gifts of money
[603] as well. If the girl's father owned many cattle, he killed a
beast, and they feasted that night, and the visitors carried
home meat with them as well as the presents to the child. It
was all very formal and correct, except when the young
mother escaped for a short time to the circle of her sisters and
girlhood friends, and exchanged confidences with them.

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862 other compounds, so that the child should not 'see the mother's breasts and cry for them'. Nevertheless they did cry, some of them day and night at first, and many for weeks at night when the indulgent warmth of the mother on her mat was exchanged for the kindly but somewhat stern care [603] of the grandmother or another older woman. Paternal grandmothers did not believe in spoiling Ngoni children, and the child was often left to cry itself to sleep.

593 The Ngoni used to say: 'On the day when a child was weaned, all the village knew. It was not a secret. People 862 spoke about it to show that the parents were now free to have another child.' The mother-in-law and the other senior 606 women of the father's family took the initiative as well as assuming responsibility for deciding the moment for weaning. Those same senior women who had assisted at the birth of the child arrived one morning on the veranda of the mother's hut and announced, 'We want to wean this child.' Apparently the mother was sometimes capable of refusing to co-operate. She did not want to give up suckling the child, so she picked it up and ran out of the hut past the women, and hid herself and her child with some of her friends. The senior women did not stoop to argument. They formed into a procession and filed out of the compound saying, 'Well, she has refused. She can now find the proper time herself, with her husband.' The young mother, who had yielded to a sudden impulse, found herself on reflection in great difficulty. It was considered a 'shame' for her to do the weaning herself, and her husband was jeered at by his brothers and friends for having a rebellious wife who did not pay attention to the claims of his family on the child.

862 So when the senior women announced that they had come to do the weaning, most young mothers meekly submitted, whatever their personal sentiments were. The senior women pounded chillies and put the hot paste on the mother's breasts, and held the child near enough to smell the chillies, even to touch them. They said to the child, 'Leave it alone.

'A NEW STRANGER HAS COME'

This breast is now bad'—and they spat downwards as they 862
 did when something was really bad. While the child was
 howling with fright and frustration, the mother's breasts
 were covered with a cloth. The child was then picked up
 and carried away in its carrying cloth to the compound of
 its paternal grandmother, or a widowed paternal aunt,
 attended by its own nurse girl. If it had a feeding bottle, or
 one could be made for it, it was given cow's milk, as well as [853]
 gruel, and curds and whey. The Ngoni women believed that
 if a weaned child was given cow's milk it would forget its
 mother's breasts quickly, but they admitted that it was a
 conventional belief and not always justified.

*Social relationships involved in the birth of a child:**Wife to husband's family*

Throughout the period of pregnancy, during childbirth and 606
 after, up to and including weaning, the mother of a new
 baby was made to feel her position as a stranger among her
 husband's relatives. Before marriage it had been impressed
 on her by her own family that, at any rate in the early years
 of marriage, she must be obedient and humble, not only
 to establish her own present and future position among her
 husband's people, but for the sake of the reputation of her
 own family from whom she was now separated. The key
 relationship in this cycle of pregnancy, birth, weaning and
 new conception was that between her and her mother-in-law.
 If she showed respect by being humble and obedient, she
 could establish a behaviour pattern which in the end reward-
 ed her by giving her self-respect because she was doing her
 duty in accepting the authority of her husband's mother. It
 was no easy path for a high-spirited girl who had had freedom
 and indulgence in her own home. She knew however that
 these first few years of marriage and child-bearing were the
 critical ones. She could see for herself how women who had
 been married longer had more freedom from the authority
 of their mothers-in-law because they had learned how to

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- 606 handle them, as well as how to conform to required behaviour. So she put up with present restrictions for the sake of future peace and harmony. Her lot was to live there with her husband's people, and the birth of the child was a strong link in the chain which bound her to them. Meantime she [572] found some relief in her friends among the other young wives, and particularly with the one in whom she placed her confidence, and who acted as her go-between with her mother-in-law.

Wife to husband

- 593 Throughout the intricate and often vexing relations with her mother-in-law and other senior women, the husband-wife relationship remained for the young mother a steadying and constant factor. She had been attracted to him in courtship; [58] she had had the chance of accepting or refusing him when the marriage proposals were made; the cattle had been handed over to her father to seal the marriage contract. For all these and other reasons she held on to her love for her husband and her relationship with him, whatever overbearing behaviour might be shown her by his relatives. Hence she took care of his possessions in the hut they shared, helping the senior women to send them out of the hut just before the confinement. She redirected food towards him when it was sent to her during her confinement, gladly going short herself in order to prove her devotion. She was glad that after coming out of the hut, having a nurse girl meant that she could keep her body and her clothes clean and sweet-smelling and therefore pleasing to him. She was happy when the ritual cleansing of the hut and of herself made it possible for her to cook for her husband again and endear him to her by that means. When weaning the child caused her pain and frustration, there was at the same time a deep satisfaction that full intercourse was now officially permitted [834] between her and her husband, and that they were free to have another child.

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591 Changes in residence at and after marriage influenced the
184 composition of the group of relatives who assisted at births. In
844 the central kingdom daughters of leading men in the village
often stayed in their father's village at marriage. Hence the
father's sisters were often present at the birth and the wife's
mother and her sisters might be living in the village. If the
[614] wife belonged to a higher ranking Ngoni clan than her
husband, her relatives shared responsibility with those of the
husband's family.

177 As may be imagined the struggle between mother-in-law
844 control and western medical practices at childbirth was a
[759] protracted one. Even when there was a younger member of
the husband's family trained as a nurse or midwife, she by
no means had her way in organizing the conduct of the birth.
She might introduce a few hygienic measures such as clean
cloths instead of old rags, and sterilized thread for tying the
cord. But unless the senior women were frightened, and they
seldom were, by prolonged and difficult labour, the Ngoni
families were averse to taking a young mother into hospital.
● [606] The chief reason was the challenge to the authority of the
mother-in-law, especially when the younger women who had
some knowledge of western medical practices questioned the
advice of the senior women.

FAMILY LIFE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

choice and variety of food, was primarily to please him, and to meet the incessant claims on his hospitality when visitors came. A well-ordered and harmonious household also pleased him, and conversely the sounds of women quarrelling angered him and violated his canons of accepted Ngoni behaviour. It was his wife's task to supervise the household helpers, who were mostly non-Ngoni, and to make them conform to Ngoni patterns by controlling their rages, instead of yelling at each other and hurling accusations of witchcraft at those with whom they were angry. 593 592 [183] 357 592

Ngoni women also took a serious view of another aspect of pleasing their husbands, namely attention to their person and dress. The old elaborate hair-dressing of Ngoni women, the scrupulous washing of their bodies with sweet-smelling leaves, the use of oil and clarified butter on the skin and hair, and the careful tying and draping of cloths and arranging of bead headbands and necklaces—these all were forms of beauty treatment and personal hygiene designed to please the husband. They also reinforced the self-respect and authority of well-born Ngoni women, marking them out by their well-groomed appearance from the 'workers' and 'helpers' who surrounded them. 562 593 302 515 801 [565]

The young Ngoni child, up to the age of six or seven, grew up in a women's world of the kind just described. His mother was learning from his paternal grandmother the increasing duties and responsibilities of an Ngoni wife, although she was supposed to have learned some of them in her own home from her mother before marriage. We saw in Chapter II how the social horizons of a small Ngoni child were never of a narrow type, restricted to his individual family. The care of a child, especially between the time of weaning and the coming of second teeth, was the concern of a number of women in addition to his own mother, from whom he was snatched away at weaning, and, for a time at least, kept away from her household for eating and sleeping. 602 855 [606]

Among the female population of a village most nearly [561]

842 woman, who was sometimes a younger sister or a junior father's
595 daughter. This woman then became a linked co-wife (*nshanzi*)⁷
subordinate to her barren sister. If the linked wife was also barren
then the man could demand another one. The barren woman was
never sent back to her own relatives but continued to live with her
husband. Children of the linked wife were allocated to her and she
587 became responsible for their upbringing. Similarly if a wife died
before she had borne a child a linked co-wife replaced her.

842 If the man was sterile he used to arrange for a friend to sleep
837 secretly with his wife so that she should conceive. The friend was
rewarded with a beast after a child had been born but the reason
for making the reward was kept secret. If a seedraiser was caught
he was killed for committing adultery, despite the fact of his having
been called in by the husband.⁸

837 As well as being fertile, wives were expected to be chaste. On
684 this point the evidence is clear. Wiese states that adulterers were
always killed.⁹ all subsequent writers have agreed with him. I
was told that if the woman's husband was not an important person
he was sometimes placated with a present of cattle. If the husband
persisted in referring the matter to the chief the senior lieutenants
of the chief might intercede on his behalf, if this was the man's
first offence. Otherwise the man and the woman were both killed
by one of the senior lieutenants.

582 The approved mode of behaviour for women was chastity before
[837] marriage, submission in the choice of husband, and fertility and
fidelity in marriage. These obligations were clear-cut and definite
and of universal applicability. The obligations of affines towards
602 one another were not so straightforward, and their fulfilment was
a process marked by ritual transfers of cattle and carefully prescribed
modes of behaviour. In particular the relationship of a man to his
606 wife's mother was altered progressively from one of strict avoidance
to openly expressed friendliness. The stages in the process represented
the gradual acceptance of the man into the family of his wife's
parents as a son-in-law, the father of their daughter's children.

586 Marriage was entered into without compulsion on either side, but
[584] the right to terminate it was held in the man's group alone. A
woman could not on any ground secure a divorce. All my informants
agreed on this point. A man could divorce his wife at any time by
sending her back to her own kinsfolk, giving her a small present as
an indication that he had divorced her. If he had offered bridewealth
for her, her kinsfolk were under an obligation to provide him with a

⁷ Read, in her 'Moral code', p. 18 translates this word (*nshanzi*) as 'substitute'.
Lancaster, 'Tentative chronology', p. 79, gives the word as *nshlanze*. Kuper,
An African Aristocracy, p. 39 translates the Swazi word *inhlanti* as 'subordinate
co-wife'. I have chosen the translation 'linked co-wife' as there are other kinds
of subordinate co-wife who are not *nshanzi*, and some *nshanzi* are not substitutes.

⁸ See below, p. 34.

⁹ Wiese, op. cit. 'Expédition . . .', p. 471, and 'Geschichte . . .', pp. 189-90.

which the marriage lacked substance. We may look on these rites as fulfilling two social functions. Firstly they affirmed the position of the bride as wife of her husband, and secondly they emphasized the role of her parents as parents-in-law. In all the ceremonies of marriage the man and his wife were supported by members of their own groups, but we do not know exactly who these supporters were. They may have been agnatic kin, maternal kin, neighbours, or political superiors. From what we know of modern marriage it is likely that the composition of these groups of supporters was never rigidly determined.

The beginning of the marriage was announced at a ceremony which we may refer to as the gall bladder rite. It was held in the man's village and, after a beast had been killed, the bride was anointed with its gall and intestinal fat.¹⁴ Another rite, which took place up to a year later, was held when the bride cooked food for her husband for the first time.¹⁵ Before this ceremony she relied for her food on the man's other wives or his mother or grandmother. If the marriage was a successful one, that is, if the woman had borne live children and the husband was treating her well, the woman's parents showed their appreciation of their son-in-law by sending him, from time to time, presents of beer.¹⁶ The son-in-law, or his father, rewarded the women who brought the beer with a present of meat. Later, the wife's parents brewed beer for the son-in-law and called him to their village so that he might formally enter his wife's mother's hut.¹⁷ Later still, a ceremony was held at which the man and his wife's mother ate together.¹⁸ At these rites of entering into the mother-in-law's hut or eating with her, a beast was sometimes killed by the father-in-law for the benefit of the man.

4. Relationship to affines

Apart from the specific ceremonial obligations there were continuing obligations of hospitality and assistance between the two groups. There was always visiting between them, and indeed

¹⁴ This ceremony is called *lusiwu*, a word said to be of Zulu origin whose meaning I have been unable to trace. Informants were unable to say what it meant. The gall bladder is called *nyongo*, from the Zulu *inyongo*. Rattray, op. cit. pp. 40 and 114, and Scott, *A cyclopaedic dictionary of the Mang'anja language spoken in British Central Africa*, p. 486, both translate the Nyanja word *nyongo* as spleen, but from Rattray's description of a marriage ceremony it seems that a gall bladder must have also been in use among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland.

¹⁵ *Mphahiso*. Cf. the Zulu *uku-phahisa*, to help or make to cook. Weise, op. cit. 'Expedição...', pp. 473-4, and 'Geschichte...', p. 192 describes what seems to be a similar ceremony, which he says took place a few days after marriage.

¹⁶ All offerings of beer which are carried from one place to another, to a son-in-law or to a headman or chief, are called *vipeho*. Cf. Zulu *uku-phaha*, to cook.

¹⁷ Called *mungeniso*. Cf. Zulu *uku-ngenisa*, to enter another person's hut.

¹⁸ Called either *myelano*, from the Zulu *uku-dlana*, or *kulyelano*, from the Ngoni *ku-lyelano*, both verbs meaning 'to eat together'.

606 Wiesse suggests that the woman only gradually transferred her place
[91] of residence from her father's village to that of her husband.¹⁹ If
[593] the husband and wife quarrelled, the woman ran away to her father's
village for protection, and had to be persuaded to return by her
husband. It is difficult to find out if there was any obligation on
the man to labour for his father-in-law. Such an obligation exists
[583] to-day, but informants like to maintain that in the past the Ngoni
[241] never troubled themselves with agriculture, but lived entirely on
beer, meat, and raided crops. But we know from contemporary
writers that they did have gardens, although they may perhaps
have been cultivated only by recent captives and by women.

An important obligation on the man was to avoid his wife's
mother. He did not speak to her, went off into the bush if he met
her on a path, and did not pass in front of her hut. With his
father-in-law he was formal and reserved, but he did speak to him.
These patterns were established at betrothal, and with the passage
of years were gradually set aside. The final ceremony in which
the man ate with his mother-in-law was the social recognition of
his successful performance of the role of son-in-law and of husband
to their daughter. Even after this ceremony he could not sit on
the same mat as his mother-in-law. The position of the woman in
respect to her parents-in-law was much easier, and she did not
avoid them or their hut.

581 As a result of these formal and informal modes of interaction
602 between the man's group and the woman's group, links of affinity
were established which cut across the residential system, with its
chains of authority and responsibility, superordination and sub-
ordination. The common interest of persons bound together by
these links was the success of the marriage, and the well-being of
the children. A quarrel between a man and his wife led to processes
of discussion, deliberation and conciliation involving the two groups.
The children of the marriage grew up knowing not only where they
belonged politically, but also where they were welcome as sister's
[1858] sons and daughter's sons. Some children were sent to the father's
mother to be reared, some to the mother's mother. The pregnancies
of the woman were reported to her own relatives as well as to her
husband's.

It is impossible to tell to what extent people consciously planned
their marriages and the marriages of their children with the object
of ramifying their affinal ties. But we do know that a wife who
[1554] had been brought from a long way off was regarded more highly
than one who came from the same village as her husband, and that
a woman who married her cross-cousin was, other things being equal,
lower in status than her husband's unrelated other wives. These
gradations in status suggest that the value of a marriage which
established a link between a man and some hitherto unconnected

¹⁹ Wiesse, op. cit. 'Expedicao . . .', p. 473, and 'Geschichte . . .', pp. 191-2.

ponding payment through which they can attempt to control the relationship between the couple. Yet both groups of kin are interested in the successful outcome of the marriage, and therefore attempt to influence the choice of marriage partner. 581
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3. Formal interaction

In the formal negotiations that precede a marriage, and in the ceremonies that mark its stages of development, the kinsfolk are always involved. The married couple depend on their kin for economic assistance, and are under obligations to help their kin. The place of residence of the couple is determined by the disposition of their kin in different villages. If the man is a labour migrant his interests are represented by his rural kinsfolk. In general it is the fathers of the couple who are most directly concerned, if they are available, but in all Ngoni situations in which a man (or woman) appeals to his kin for support there are no hard and fast rules about the genealogical positions his supporters should occupy. If a man's father is old he turns to his elder brother. If his genealogically close kinsmen live far away, he turns to those who live nearer although they may be further removed from him in genealogical terms. If there is no male kinsman available he may seek the support of an old kinswoman. 581
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The formal situations which require the co-operation of kinsfolk are the matchmaking, the gall bladder ceremony (which we may perhaps regard as the wedding), the ceremony of first cooking, the hoeing party, the announcement of first pregnancy, the carrying of beer and the entry into the wife's mother's hut. Betrothal is another formal situation requiring the presence of the woman's kin, but as nowadays very few girls are betrothed, we shall omit this from our analysis. It will be recalled that even in the old days betrothal applied only to girls under puberty and that a girl who reached puberty without becoming betrothed proceeded to marriage without passing through any intermediate stage. The matchmaking, at which the marriage is arranged, is carried on in a formal manner but there is little ceremonial. The carrying of beer is a visit from one group to the other that can be repeated as many times as they wish, but all the other ceremonies occur but once in a marriage, if they occur at all. The hoeing party has a certain economic value but the other ceremonies are largely symbolic in content. As with the marriage payments, the marriage ceremonials can all be dispensed with and yet there be a marriage which to all intents and purposes is valid. What cannot be omitted so easily from a marriage are the patterns of respect and avoidance between the couple and their affines, particularly between a man and his wife's mother. Even here, however, there is some variation in practice. 601
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[584]
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The usual procedure in matchmaking is that first the man and the woman agree between themselves that they will get married. They reach this agreement in secret without reference to their kinsfolk 584

At the hoeing party, her husband goes with kinsfolk and neighbours to work in the garden of her mother for a day and they are rewarded by her father. In the carrying of beer, a party of women from the wife's village carry beer brewed by her mother to her husband's father, who rewards them. At the final ceremony of entering the wife's mother's hut, a party of men and women from the man's village go to the woman's parents' village and are entertained by them. The husband enters his mother-in-law's hut, a woman from his village eats together from the same spoon with a woman from the wife's village, and his parents sit with her parents and discuss the marriage of their children.⁴ It will be noticed that these ceremonies are similar to those mentioned in connexion with marriage in 'the time of peace'⁵ except that what was formerly a distinct rite, at which a man ate with his wife's mother, has now become part of the ceremony of entering her hut.

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All these ceremonies can be omitted, and the man and woman still be validly married to each other. It often happens that a woman dies before her daughter's husband has entered her hut, and in this ceremony no one can act as a substitute for her. If a man's parents-in-law die soon after his marriage, he will never receive beer from them, while even if they remain alive but live far away, the ceremony may never be performed. If a man quarrels with his parents-in-law, they may decide not to send him beer though he is living near them. A migrant labourer who returns home for a short holiday of a month or so may not feel inclined to get up a party to work in his wife's mother's garden. Marriages often begin in Southern Rhodesia, and it is only when a couple come home, sometimes with children, that the man initiates the formal approach to his wife's parents and makes the offer of the legalization payment. In a marriage of this kind it is too late to hold the gall bladder ceremony, and it is never performed. If a man acquiesces without enthusiasm in the marriage of his son to a girl of whom he does not really approve, he may not go to the trouble of arranging the gall bladder ceremony for her and the couple begin their married life together in the village of one of them without any ceremony at all. The absence of these ceremonies, even less than the absence of marriage payments, does not invalidate the legal rights of husband and wife. It does, however, mean that they are less sure of the informal support of their kinsmen. The kinsfolk express their participation in the marriage of the couple by these formalized patterns of behaviour. Their interests in the marriage may remain without this formal articulation with it, and the interests may find expression in other ways, as by intervention in quarrels, support in litigation, care of children, visits, and so on. Ngoni believe that the

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⁴ See Appendices for accounts of the formal procedures at the marriage ceremonies.

⁵ See above, p. 9.

- 606 good man behaves towards his father-in-law with obedience and respect, and that he is rewarded by the gifts of beer sent to his father by his wife's father. If these gifts are not made, then the man must be 'bad' or his father-in-law 'fierce' or 'cruel'.

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829 There is one type of marriage in which none of these ceremonies are performed. This is what is known as the 'poorly fixed marriage' which lies on the borderland between marriage and concubinage. People do not expect a 'poorly fixed' marriage to last long, and this expectation is based more on their estimation of the characters of the couple involved than on a consideration of the absence of marriage ceremonies and payments. If a couple, who have shown by their general behaviour that they are fickle and quarrelsome, begin to live together without going through any of the formalities of marriage, people speak of their marriage as 'poorly fixed'. If the union breaks up there is no divorce procedure and the couple merely go their own separate ways. The categorization 'poorly fixed' is not applied to all marriages in which there are no marriage payments, for poverty is usually regarded as a valid excuse for not offering money or animals or for not brewing beer. It is rather poverty of character and love of promiscuity and fickleness that lead to 'poorly fixed' marriages.

581 Sometimes a marriage which begins as 'poorly fixed' lasts for some time and becomes accepted as a proper marriage. An example of this is the marriage of Rachel and Esau (p. 63). In 1946 I was told this was a 'poorly fixed' marriage and that it would not last. In 1949 opinion had changed, and as we have seen, Esau succeeded in making the legalization payment for his wife. Even if his money had been refused his position would still have been better than it was in 1946 for he had shown that he could live with Rachel for three years without an undue amount of quarrelling and she had not drifted off to some other man. By making the legalization payment

[583] Esau made his rights over her more certain.

[829] People who live in 'poorly fixed' marriages are not despised for doing so, but are rather pitied for their moral inability to make a 'well fixed' marriage. They are never so sure of the support of their relatives and neighbours as they would be otherwise. A man who has not made the legalization payment may be supported by his wife's relatives when she commits adultery if they think that he is a good husband and that it is she who is at fault in the matter. But if a man neglects his obligations towards his wife's parents and in particular does not approach them formally at the beginning of the marriage to tell them of his desire to marry their daughter, they may turn on him if he tries to exercise rights over the woman. In court, the wife's father may look at his son-in-law, who perhaps has been his neighbour for many years, and say 'Who is this man? We do not know him'; and the court will refuse to recognize his claims.

claims. In retrospect, when discussing an erstwhile 'poorly fixed' marriage that has broken up, people will say 'That was not a proper marriage', and 'She was just his friend'. In all the tables we have excluded 'poorly fixed' marriages from consideration. 586 128

The initiative in strengthening a 'poorly fixed' marriage lies with the man and not with the woman's relatives. If their daughter is living with a man who has not made the legalization payment they cannot bring him to court and force him to pay. If their daughter has only just passed puberty there may be grounds for an abduction suit, but if she has been married before or is considered old enough to decide for herself, her relatives are unlikely to take any action in the courts against her husband. The woman cannot be forced to return to her own people. Similarly if no bridewealth has been paid, the children cannot be forced to live in one village rather than in the other. They can be asked to do so, but they cannot be taken to court if they refuse. 581 583

All 'poorly fixed' marriages are marriages without payments, but not all marriages without payment are 'poorly fixed'. It will be seen from Table XII that no payments at all have been offered in about a third of the marriages in our sample. In some of the marriages for which there have been offers of payment, these consist only of the small present given as 'snuff-box' in modern marriage. Yet these marriages are valid despite the paucity or absence of payment. Many of them have lasted for a long time and the lack of payment is almost forgotten. It would be an act of maliciousness on the part of the woman's relatives if after twenty years of happy married life they began to remind her husband that he had not yet made the legalization payment. With the increasing importance of marriage certificates on which the legalization payment is recorded, and the rise in power of the Native Authority, the position may well change in years to come. At present, most marriages without payments are more like marriages with payment than they are like the unions of men with concubines and prostitutes. The persevering inquirer may unearth the lack of payments, but in the day-to-day life of the village, as well as in many of the formal situations of marriage, this lack is not significant. In the work of the garden, in the sharing of food, on festive occasions when there is beer and dancing, there is no distinction between wives married in one way or the other. More significantly, we find instances where despite the absence of any payments, beer has been brewed for a daughter's husband and he has been invited to go through the ceremony of 'entering the wife's mother's hut'. Some marriages are solemnized in church, with the approval of the parents on both sides, without any payments being made. The rules of avoidance between a man and his wife's mother operate independently of the marriage payments, and widows are subject to the same restrictions [606]

¹ *Mfuko, camulomo, cavulamulomo*. See above, p. 39, n. 18.

MARRIAGE IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

71 N

see them and to a large extent participate in them, joining in the dancing and drinking, giving presents and advice to the bride, and so on. Less spectacular are the continual patterns of interaction between a man and his affines arising from his partial dependence on them and his obligations towards them as expressed in everyday life. A man must avoid his mother-in-law and help his father-in-law with garden work, and if he is living uxoriously he may be dependent on his affines for food and housing. If they move from one village to another he moves with them.

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[591]

Avoidance is most marked between a man and his wife's mother. He must not speak to her, sit near her, pass in front of or enter her hut, and he should endeavour not to meet her on the path. Above all he must never sit on her mat, for sitting on a woman's mat is regarded as symbolically equivalent to sleeping with her. To a lesser extent a man must avoid his father-in-law, but it is not considered amiss for a man to sit at one end of a verandah while his father-in-law sits at the other. They can talk to each other if necessary. A woman is comparatively free with her parents-in-law and does not avoid their hut. The formalities of relationship between a man and his parents-in-law begin when he starts to negotiate his marriage, or earlier if their daughter is betrothed to him while she is still a child. With the passage of time a man avoids his mother-in-law less, and after the ceremony of entering her hut he can sit and chat to her. Even then it is still considered shameful for him to sit on her mat.

N

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The Ngoni regard uxorial residence as part of the obligation a man has towards his wife's parents. Many couples spend their whole married life virilocally and others live permanently in uxorial marriage, but in describing where a couple ought to live, Ngoni speak always in virilocal terms. We have seen that in the old days virilocal residence was the rule but that a man might live uxoriously for a while at the beginning of his first marriage after paying 'snuff-box' until he paid bridewealth (p. 5). The Cewa lived uxoriously, but it was possible for a Cewa man to make a small payment some years after marriage permitting him to take his wife to his own village. Nowadays among the Ngoni some men, but not all, begin their marriages uxoriously. A man may do so either because he finds it more convenient, due to lack of suitable accommodation in his own village, quarrels with his kin or shortage of food, or else because he is made to do so by his parents-in-law. A parent who does not approve of his (or her) daughter's suitor may accept the young man on condition that the couple live under his eye for a while so that he can assure himself that his daughter will be well treated by her husband. Sometimes it is said that a man who has not yet made the legalization payment must live uxoriously until he can find the money, but this is not always done and some couples whose marriages are only 'poorly fixed' live virilocally.

M

[591]

The proportion of couples who live virilocally varies from one village to another.

591 after a year or so. If he keeps it going himself he visits his own
241 village for a week or two at a time to tend the garden, and stores the
423 produce with a relative in the village. If, however, a man intends to
reside for many years in his wife's village, he gives away his garden
and concentrates his labours in his wife's garden. After a year
[343] or two he builds her a storehouse in her village and the couple begin
to keep their own supplies separate from those of her relatives.

431 Even when the couple have their own storehouse it is considered
262 proper if from time to time they are given maize by their parents.
If a woman living virilocally goes to visit her parents and relatives
and returns without maize or flour her husband's relatives are likely
to laugh at her and say 'She must come from a very poor family'.

591 Uxorilocal residence is described by the vernacular term *chomwene*.
606 In its most general usage this word refers to the obligations a man
owes to his wife's parents, particularly at the beginning of his
marriage. It has three specific meanings:

- (i) Uxorilocal residence.
- (ii) Assistance rendered from time to time by a man in his wife's mother's garden.
- (iii) A hoeing party of men and women from the man's village which works in his wife's mother's garden.

Uxorilocal residence is classed with these other two aspects of affinal obligation and like them it can be avoided completely, shirked, or executed in full. The extent to which the obligations are fulfilled

Table XIV. Virilocality and Uxorilocality, 1948-9

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Wife's residence.	Husband's residence		Total
	Rural	Away	
Virilocal ..	72	14	86
Uxorilocal ..	24	20	44
Total	96	34	130
Ratio of virilocal to uxorilocal wives	3	0.7	1.95

Association between husband's residence and wife's residence

$\chi^2 = 12.83$ $P < .001$

Informants as in Table XIII

depends as much on the compliance of the man as on the insistence of his father-in-law. 591 606 ●

A payment¹⁰ of about five shillings is sometimes made by a man to his wife's father enabling him to take his wife to his own village. This is made either at the beginning of the marriage or after one or two years of uxorilocal residence, but in some marriages the payment is never made at all, and in some villages even the vernacular term is unknown. In those villages where the payment is recognized there is no consensus of opinion as to the rights granted by it. Some people hold that the payment is equivalent to a year or two of uxorilocal residence, and that, therefore, the money should be offered when the marriage is arranged, so that it may be begun virilocally. They go on to say that when a man has completed his period of uxorilocal residence, he is free to take his wife to his own village without making this payment. Other people say that a man ought to remain living uxorilocally until he makes this payment, which should therefore be done a year or so after marriage, or at some time later when the man wishes to move. Where the payment is not recognized, people either say that a man ought to live uxorilocally for a while and cannot buy himself out of this obligation, or else assert that the Ngoni, unlike the Cewa, do not marry uxorilocally and that the legalization payment allows a man to take a bride to his village as soon as he chooses. There is a wide variation in the norms held, or at least expressed, on this matter and an equally wide variation in actual behaviour. Men select their course of action by reference to the total situation in which they find themselves when they marry. A man may try to enforce one rule on one son-in-law and another rule on another. I observed one extreme case in which a man allowed one of his daughters, married to a man from her own village, to move to her husband's cluster after only a few months of uxorilocal residence in his own cluster. At the same time he would not allow another daughter to move to her husband's village after four years of uxorilocal residence, despite the offer of ten shillings payment to him. He approved of the first son-in-law while disliking the second, who had failed to report to him when his daughter first became pregnant. 583 591

We have talked of the man's village and the woman's village. It is perhaps necessary to stress that what is meant by, say, the man's village is a village to which the man's ties are stronger than those of his wife. It is likely to be a village where some relative of his is living, but the relative may be his father or his mother or his father's mother or his mother's father or some more distant connexion. Sometimes a man goes to live in his first wife's village and then brings in his second wife. The second wife is then said to be living virilocally, in the village of her husband rather than in her own, although the man is himself living in his first wife's village, 591 602

¹⁰ Nkhakula. Cf. Barnes, op. cit. p. 229

591 that is, in uxori-local marriage. In the man's village there are likely
602 to be relatives of his wife already established, but it is she who is
said to 'follow' her husband to the village and not he who 'follows'
her, since his ties to the village, and to the cluster in the village
within which they set up their household, are stronger than hers.
Similarly a man may have relatives of his own living in his wife's
village and yet be spoken of as living uxori-locally. If a woman's
father is living in her village, he will be the focus of her husband's
obligations. But if he lives a long way away and the woman has
been dependent on her grandparents, or on her mother's brother,
then it is they who will act towards her husband to some extent in
the role of substitute parents-in-law. However, a man does not
avoid his substitute mother-in-law as thoroughly as he would his
wife's own mother.

606 The obligation on a man to help his wife's parents in their garden
583 is expressed in two ways. Once during the marriage the man
must provide a party of people to hoe for the greater part of one
day in his wife's mother's garden. He must also be prepared to
work in this garden from time to time when he is called upon, and
his wife may work with him. While the labour given by the man
and his wife is useful labour, the work done by the hoeing party is
only partly useful and may do more damage than good. The
procedure is that the man, or a relative of his, tells his father-in-law
that he proposes to bring a party to hoe on such-and-such a day.
By agreeing to this the father-in-law tacitly agrees also to provide
the party with beer and presents. On the appointed day, early in
the morning, the party arrives and begins work. When the father-
in-law thinks the work has gone on long enough, he sends an
intermediary to offer a present to the leader of the hoers. If the
present is considered sufficient the party stops hoeing and returns to
the father-in-law's village. If not, it continues to hoe with renewed
vigour. At intervals the father-in-law sends intermediaries with
higher and higher offers until at last the hoers are satisfied or
exhausted and they come into the village to collect their presents and
beer. As often as not the hoers try to force the father-in-law to
offer a present at the limit of his resources, for example a beast, and,
as the offers mount, the workers become more and more excited and
their hoeing less and less useful. At the end of a day, with the light
failing, physically exhausted hoers begin to root up the maize with
the weeds, and the mother-in-law's garden may be seriously damaged.
If the father-in-law is obstinate and does not offer them what they
want the hoers may spend the night sleeping out in the garden.
By the next morning everyone is too tired to continue the matter
further, and the party disperses.¹¹

[154] This sort of hoeing party may not facilitate the cultivation of good
maize but it is of great significance to the married couple and the

¹¹ See Appendix III for an account of two of these parties.

two groups of relatives. In the partial destruction of the father-in-law's crop by the man's friends, the latent hostility between the two groups is canalized into a form that is just socially acceptable. In the later stages of hoeing the men and women in the party act wildly, dance round and round anyone who tries to interfere with them and throw earth all over them. At first all contact between the father-in-law and the leader of the party is through intermediaries, and if all goes well, and there is no crisis, the father-in-law will always remain in the background. But with rising tempers the tension increases, and the father-in-law may himself go to cajole and threaten the party. When they do decide to stop and go into the village, an attempt is made to establish peaceful relations again, and the leader of the party begins to protest that they never really intended holding out for such a large present, that they knew it was getting dark and that they could not hoe at night. They settle down to drink the beer provided by the father-in-law and in the morning go back to their own village. It is significant that the man himself cannot be the leader of the party, so that he does not come into direct contact with his father-in-law. He shelters behind the party leader, so that the chances of an open breach between him and his father-in-law are lessened.

The formalized expression of hostility, which is a feature of many Ngoni ceremonies,¹² appears most clearly in marriage in the custom of the hoeing party, but is present in some other situations, as in the instruction of the bride at the gall bladder ceremony, when she is sometimes told she has a bad character, is mean and deceitful. Even the carrying of beer can be used to express hostility, as is indicated by Reuben's remark towards the end of his son-in-law's hoeing party, that he would tell his wife to brew beer and send it to his son-in-law's village, where the women bringing beer would demand a present even greater than the one demanded by the leader of the hoers.¹³

Men and women wish their daughters to bear children, and are reluctant to marry them to impotent men. Yet childbirth is hazardous, and a woman may die in labour because of her adultery or the adultery of her husband. It is important, therefore, that a woman's parents should be informed whenever she becomes pregnant, lest the woman die and her parents hear of her death without being forewarned of the danger. It is not sufficient that the woman's parents should hear from others that their daughter is pregnant. She must go to them on a special visit to tell them the news herself. This formal notification takes place every time she is pregnant, but if, when she becomes pregnant for the first time, she is living in

¹² For another example, see the installation of the headman's deputy described in Gluckman, Mitchell and Barnes, 'The village headman in British Central Africa', *Africa*, xix (1949), pp. 100-106.

¹³ See Appendix III, p. 131.

843 her husband's village, the occasion must be recognized in a more elaborate manner. Her husband or his relatives buy her a new cloth. Wearing this cloth she stands at the door of her husband's hut, and is undressed by her husband's grandmother. The old woman rubs castor oil on her abdomen and dresses her again. A small girl from her husband's kin goes with her to her own village, and their arrival there, with the woman dressed in her new cloth, indicates formally to her parents that she is pregnant. They stay at the woman's village for about a week, and then return to her husband's village.¹⁴ Her parents have thus been made socially aware of her pregnancy, and the man can legitimately look to them for help if she becomes ill or fractious.

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684 If the woman does die in childbirth, her husband has to offer a beast to her parents even though they were told of her pregnancy.¹⁵ The husband may confess to adultery when called upon to do so by the midwife, but this does not absolve him from the obligation to pay the beast. Confession absolves him from the charge of having caused the death of his wife by his careless behaviour, but he must still recompense his parents-in-law for the death of their daughter. It is recognized that a woman may die in childbirth despite the absence of adultery during pregnancy or despite full confession of adultery by both the woman and her husband. She dies just because God lets her die, and not because of any human misconduct. Yet she reaches the situation in which there is the danger of death because of her position as the wife of her husband. It is the 'work' of married women to bear children, and it is the 'work' of the husband if his wife dies in childbirth to offer a beast to her parents so that they may mourn their daughter.

5. Quarrels

581 We see then that a woman is not severed utterly from her own group when she marries, but that her kinsfolk retain an interest in her welfare and have certain rights in her and in her husband. The recognition of these rights by their son-in-law increases his esteem in their eyes, and enables him to appeal to them with confidence when he needs their support. The common interest of all is in the successful maintenance of the marriage, and the mutual recognition of rights and fulfilment of obligations consolidate the social relationships established between people related by marriage. Quarrels threaten the continued existence of the marriage, and it is therefore in the common interest that they should be settled as expeditiously as possible. The intervention of affines in a personal quarrel between husband and wife is characteristic of a system in which most neighbours are kinsfolk and in which the spatial concentration of people into compact villages, where abuse shouted at one

¹⁴ This ceremony is called *ngayi*, which means 'breast-cloth' in Nsenga.

¹⁵ See above, pp. 39f.

592 mother. One of the man's sisters conducts the wife to her mother-
252 in-law's hut, and under the instruction of the assembled women
593 she begins to cook. Although people speak of her doing the cooking,
[269] in practice all she does is to look on while her sisters-in-law do
the work. The porridge is divided onto plates and distributed under
the directions of the man's mother. One plate is sent to the man's
father, one to the husband who eats the porridge with his brothers,
and one to the most important woman in the village, while some are
taken by the cooks themselves. The man's father is expected to
remark on how well the porridge has been cooked, but he may say
that it has been poorly prepared and his daughter-in-law must be
taught again. This expression of disapproval cannot be more than
a way of showing his dislike for his daughter-in-law for whatever
he says the ceremony is not repeated and the woman begins to cook
regularly for her husband. If the man's relatives are wealthy, they
may kill a goat or a sheep on this occasion, or the woman's parents
may send a sheep or a goat to be killed and eaten. The woman's
parents cannot themselves attend the ceremony.

[91] If the couple begin their marriage uxorilocally this ceremony
does not take place. The bride begins to cook for her husband as
soon as he comes to live with her, using her grand-mother's hut as a
kitchen.

Appendix III

THE HOEING PARTY

606 A man is under an obligation to provide once during his marriage
583 a party of hoers who work in his wife's mother's garden for the
greater part of one day and who are rewarded by his wife's father.
This party is called by the general word for obligations owed by a
man towards his parents-in-law, *cikomwene*.¹ The function of this
occasion, as a socially sanctioned method of expression of hostility
between a man and his affines, has already been discussed. I
attended one of these parties and my clerk attended two others.

The man, or a relative of his, tells his father that he is planning
to bring a party to hoe on such and such a day. If the father-in-law
agrees that the day is suitable he tells his wife to brew beer for the
hoers. On the agreed day the hoeing party arrive early in the
morning and begin to work in the garden. The father-in-law promises
presents to the leader of the hoers, who continue to hoe until they
are offered what they consider is sufficient. They then stop, and
go to the village to receive the present and drink beer.

¹ See above, p. 74.

One day in December 1946 a party of eight men and two women arrived at 6.30 a.m. in the garden of Dinah.^a They included Goliath, a young man recently married to a daughter of Dinah and Reuben. The party was led by one of the women. They hoed in the garden continuously but not very actively until 3 p.m. Reuben then asked Samuel, who lived in the village, to offer sixpence to the hoers. This offer was refused, and a little later Samuel came back again with the offer of a shilling. This was also refused, as was the next offer brought by Samuel, of ten shillings and sixpence. One of the hoers hinted to Samuel that they really wanted a beast. Samuel returned to the village and asked Bildah, his wife's mother and the village headman's eldest sister, to go and repeat the offer, lest Reuben should think that it was Samuel who was egging on the hoers. Bildah went with a number of people from the village and on seeing her the hoers began working frantically. They ceased to distinguish between maize and weeds and uprooted both. The hoers attacked Deborah, daughter of Dinah by a former husband, who tried to stop them, by throwing earth over her and hoeing round her as if she were a mound. One of the hoers tried to borrow my lamp so that they could continue working through the night. The people who had come from the village withdrew, followed by taunts from the hoers, 'You will find us here in the morning.' It began to get dark and at 7 p.m. when it was quite dark Reuben himself came out to speak to the hoers. He told the leader that if she insisted on a beast, he would give it them, but that he would also tell his wife to start brewing beer the next day; when his party brought the beer to their village, they would demand an even bigger present before they would go home. These remarks were met with derision and the hoers called for beer and cigarettes to sustain them through the night.

About half an hour later, the hoeing party appeared in the village and entered the hut of Goliath, who was living uxoriously at the time. The leader of the party was called to Reuben's hut. On the verandah the money was counted out and handed over to her. She then said that they had never intended to demand a beast but had been only pretending. In Goliath's hut drinking began with beer provided by Dinah. Soon an argument broke out, some of the hoers protesting that they ought to have kept on hoeing until Reuben had given them a certain beast he was keeping in Goliath's own village.

In December 1947, in a nearby village, a man agreed that his son-in-law should bring a party to hoe, but did not brew any beer for the occasion. He offered them seven shillings and sixpence, but this was refused. He then offered the same amount again, and this was accepted, but the leader of the party said that they would go on hoeing until something else was added to the present. They went on hoeing all night long, sleeping at intervals. Both

^a See above, p. 81, for the genealogical connexions of this group of people.

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583 offers had been made to the leader of the party through the mother-in-law acting as intermediary for her husband. In the morning the mother-in-law came to the garden to find the hoers still there. She fell to the ground beseeching them to stop. The leader then told the party to stop, which they did with much grumbling. One hoer said 'It would have been better if we had cut down some more maize to cool down our hearts.'

Appendix IV

CARRYING BEER

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273 The carrying of beer is the first formal occasion on which the initiative is taken by the woman's kin and not by the man's. Beer is brewed by the woman's mother and is taken to the husband's father, or if he is not available, to the husband himself. It is known as *vipeko*, a word used to describe any offering of beer sent to a chief or headman in virtue of his position as such as well as beer sent to a son-in-law. Beer can and is sent in this way more than once, to indicate the continued respect enjoyed by the man in the eyes of his parents-in-law. Members of the Dutch Reformed Church who are not allowed to drink proper beer send instead gifts of porridge to their sons-in-law. The beer, or its porridge equivalent, is sent at least once in about 40 per cent of all marriages. It is usually brewed while the couple are living virilocally.

It is held by some that a man cannot expect beer sent to him until he has made the legalization payment for his wife. In practice, if the woman's parents think that he is treating his wife well, they may brew beer for him despite the absence of legalization payment.

The beer is brewed by the woman's mother, and is carried in jars from one village to another. If the villages are too far apart to make this practicable, the woman's mother comes to stay with some relative in a nearby village and does her brewing there. She herself does not accompany the party carrying the beer.

The party may consist of, say, half-a-dozen women from the village. They carry the beer to the man's village, and halt just outside the village. Sometimes they demand a present before they will agree to enter the village. They are led to the hut of the man's parents or of his grandmother, and there they offer the beer to the man's relatives. They are given somewhere to sleep the night. In the morning people come to greet them, and as in the gall bladder ceremony they reply with a little song. The pots of beer are allocated by the man's father to important people in the village. People who come to drink the beer give presents such as threepenny bits which are collected by the leader of the party and which are

distributed among the women of the party as a recompense for carrying the beer. The married couple drink the beer but do not take any prominent part in the proceedings. The next day the man's father gives a beast or a goat or money to the leader of the party. The animal is killed and the women carry the meat back to their own village where it is divided up by some important relative of the wife. If some of the sprouted maize and flour that were prepared for the brewing remain over, the mother-in-law may brew again, and send it to her son-in-law as before. The second brew of beer is called 'offering'.¹

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Appendix V

ENTERING THE WIFE'S MOTHER'S HUT

As performed nowadays elements are combined from what formerly were two distinct ceremonies. The name of one of these, 'eating together' (*mzyelano*) is now not often heard and the combined ceremony is known by the name of the other, 'entering' (*mngeniso*). It represents the final stage in the acceptance of the man as a satisfactory son-in-law and marks the formal setting aside of the avoidance relationship between him and his wife's mother. It is performed in about one marriage in eight. I attended two of these ceremonies.

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Some informants say that like the carrying of beer the ceremony of entering is not performed unless the legalization payment is made. However, I have recorded instances in which the ceremony was performed in the absence of any payment. It almost always occurs after beer has been carried to the man's village once or twice and when the man is living virilocally.

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The parents of the woman send word to the village of the man that on such and such a day there will be beer brewed for him to enter the hut of his mother-in-law. On the day appointed the man and his wife go in procession with other people, singing and dancing, from their village to the village of the woman's parents. The procession traditionally should be led by the eldest child of the marriage, boy or girl, holding a club aloft, but this is not always done. The man's parents do not go with the party but stay behind in the village. On the outskirts of the woman's parents' village, the party may be met by people dancing out to meet them, and they sometimes pause to drink beer brought out to them. The dancing party go on into the cattle byre, or if there is no byre to some clear space on the fringe of the village. They enter the byre in a rough

¹ Nsembe, an Nsenga word.

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[213] order, first women, then men, and the couple last. Inside the byre they are given beer which they drink without praising.¹ They then dance on to the hut of the woman's mother and enter. Beer and a plate of boiled maize have already been put inside. The dancers are joined by a few important people from the family of the woman, but the woman's parents do not come into the hut at this stage. The people from the man's village, including the woman and her husband, sit on one side of the hut and the people from the woman's family on the other. One of the woman's relatives makes a speech about the added responsibilities of the husband, how he must come and visit in their village and must help his parents-in-law. There is sometimes a speech in reply from the man's side. A threepenny bit or a sixpence is placed on a basketwork plate on top of the beer by one of the man's people, and someone from the woman's side does the same. The money is picked up by someone else from the woman's side. Sometimes there is another plate, into which a representative of the man will put the real gift, as opposed to these tokens, which may be as much as one pound. This is also taken up by someone from the woman's side and is later given to the father-in-law.

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213 A woman from the wife's side then takes a spoonful of boiled maize and spits it out again. She is followed by a woman from the husband's side, who does the same. This ends the formal stage of the ceremony and drinking begins. The distribution of the beer is controlled by the senior man in the husband's party. If they are so inclined they may go back again into the byre and dance or they may wander round the village dancing. If the father-in-law wishes, he may kill a beast for them.² When they are tired and have drunk their fill, they go back to their own village, leaving a walking stick behind them in the hut.

On the next day the party of dancers come back again, this time with the husband's parents. They go back into the wife's mother's house and the wife's parents join them there. There is beer, and the wife's mother fills a bowl and presents it to her son-in-law, kneeling at his feet and drinking from the bowl before handing it over to him, after the usual fashion of offering a bowl of beer to anyone. The son-in-law drinks, and passes the beer round the hut. The rest of the pots of beer are then presented to the son-in-law's people, and drinking begins again. The two sets of parents sit together, and discuss the characters of their children. There is much plain speaking. When all the beer is finished the party breaks up, and people return to their own villages. The proceedings on the second day are referred to as 'following the dancing-stick'.³

¹ For the custom of praising when drinking beer, see Barnes, 'Fort Jameson Ngoni', pp. 216 ff. The beer drunk in the byre is called *nkatulo*.

² Called *congela*. Cf. Zulu *uhu-ngenela*, to enter for (something).

³ *Kulanda sinthonga*. Cf. Zulu *uhu-landa*, to follow, and *in-tonga*, a stick.

the allusion being to the stick which is left overnight in the hut 'to watch over the beer'. In retrospect the people from the man's village talk of having 'fetched a broom there'.⁶⁰⁶
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There seems to be considerable variation in the way in which this ceremony of 'entering' is carried out. It is not often performed and people have different ideas of what is correct. The man's people may decide to brew beer on their own account, so that sometimes the dancers are well intoxicated before they even arrive at the woman's village. They then find it difficult to adhere rigidly to any traditional form of behaviour.

* *Teyotola mthanyelo*. Cf. Zulu *uku-tola*, to get, and *umshanelo*, a hand-broom.

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MARRIAGE (CHIPETA)

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went across there, and heard what he told us. He says you must go and live there." And the man says, "We shall do so, it's not far to the water." Then the old men (who are negotiating the affair) return there and say, "We shall stay with you, there is water, and it is not far away." And the village chief says, "Let him come, this is not some other land that eats up a man." Then the old men return, and bring their child and take him to the chief, saying, "Here is your man, and he has no other words [meaning complaining, bad-tempered words]; all he ever says is, 'Cook me porridge, for I am hungry.'" And the chief replies, "For our part, our one has not one little thing (against her), cooking is her forte and pounding flour, and, perhaps, even hoeing, but as to that we do not know for certain as we have not yet seen her with a hoe in her hand."

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II. Then the old men return, going back to their own village, and leave the child. He must sleep in the quarters of the young unmarried men, and his wife will cook his food for him until he has built his hut. He does not cohabit with her. When he has finished building it, they put him in it. At the village where he is, he does not ever see his mother-in-law, they always run away from each other. When he says, "Now I am sick of this running away, let us 'uncover' each other." Then the mother-in-law cooks beer, and the son-in-law gets some calico, and they go and call the people from the man's village, telling them that now they wish "to uncover." Then the people from the man's village come and take the man and go with him to his mother-in-law's hut. His head is still covered with his calico and the mother-in-law's also is still over her head. Then the man's brother goes and uncovers the mother-in-law and takes the

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present of calico and gives it her. The mother-in-law pours out a little pot of beer and gives it to her "little" son-in-law, and he drinks and drinks, and one drinks and hands to the other. The brother is still sitting (covered up). When this is finished the mother-in-law goes out and the man then gets up and drinks with his companions, saying, "Now we have 'uncovered' each other, and the state of mother-in-lawship requiring one to run away from the other is finished." They now honour each other.

IX

THE RAIN TEMPLE

789 I. If the rains do not come people say, "Look at this, the rain keeps refusing to fall from above; come, let us try to propitiate the rain spirit, and perhaps the rain may come." Then they begin to make ready, saying, "Let all of you collect a few handfuls of grain, we can at least try; if we fail we shall do so having at least made the attempt." Then they begin to collect the maize, the very same day it is ground and pounded, and they boil the beer and pour it in a gourd-cup. Next morning at dawn every one comes together and they go to the rain temple. They clear away the grass that the ground may be open. He who is chief of the ceremony sits in the middle and first draws some of the beer and pours it in a pot buried in the ground, and says, "Master, *Chauta*, you have hardened your heart towards us, what would you have us do? We

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their relations may dig them out, and place them in some other country.) And they throw them to the back of the cave, and take the corpse and lay it on top of them. Then they begin to fill in, the ones in the cave are groaning, "Alas, alas!" When they have finished filling in, they go to the water to bathe. When they return to the village they dance.

XV

THE CHIEF OF THE KUKA AND THE SON-IN-LAW

I. The chief of the Kuka hut and his son-in-law once hoed a garden. When the maize grew up, the father-in-law told his son-in-law to build a watch-tower. Then the father-in-law went off and forged some arrow-heads, and gave them to his son-in-law, saying, "There are some arrows, you must keep a look-out with them in the garden here." And the son-in-law received the arrows, and remained at the watch-tower there. One day the wind came and flattened down all the maize, and his father-in-law came to walk on a round of inspection in the garden, and then he saw that the wind had laid the maize, and he clapped his hands and said, "Oh, to-day I see wonders, those arrow-heads I just forged for him to keep by him [and look at]." And then he went up to the watch-tower, where his son-in-law was, and asked him, saying, "Those arrow-heads I forged, I just forged that you might sleep with them on the watch-tower here?" And the son-

130 THE CHIEF OF THE KUKA AND THE SON-IN-LAW

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539 in-law replied, "And how am I to wound the winds?"

II. When the father-in-law had gone off, the son-in-law took some maize and went off to set some falling-traps, and one of his traps caught a guinea-fowl, and he took it out, and went and gave it to his wife, saying, "There is a guinea-fowl, cook it; I am going away a long way; I shall be away four days, and for my share you must harden some of the gravy over the fire, the meat you can eat yourself." Then the woman went off and told her father, saying, "That fellow has killed a guinea-fowl, and he tells me I must brown the gravy before the fire for him, and the meat I am to eat, and where he has gone he will remain four days." And the father said, "And how can you brown gravy over a fire, my child?"

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606 III. When the son-in-law returned, he told his wife, "Cook some porridge." And the woman did so, and went with it to her husband. But he looked into the dish and said, "Where is my gravy, that I told you to brown before the fire?" Then the woman went off to tell her father, saying, "He is asking for the gravy." Then the father went off to tell the villagers, "You must settle a case for me." So the people assembled at the village court in crowds, and (one) said, "Chief of the Kuka hut, state your case that we may hear." Then the chief of the Kuka hut took up his case and began to speak, saying, "As for me, I bid you ask my son-in-law there, on my account, the things which he has in his heart." Then the people spoke, laying the charge before the son-in-law. And he replied, "Yes, what he says is true about me, but I was at the watch-tower, and I saw the chief of the Kuka hut, and he asks of me, saying, "You there, do you just sleep on the watch-tower here, and not keep a look-out over the garden? The arrows I went

THE TORTOISE AND THE ANTELOPE

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and forged that you might just keep them by you, 539
 and not keep a look-out for what is eating up the 627
 maize in the garden." And as for me, I replied, 606
 saying, "And you, how do you wound the winds?"
 So I also went and caught some "meat," that they
 in their turn should brown some gravy for me, for,
 seeing they know how to wound the wind with an
 arrow, they could also brown gravy before a fire;
 and that is what the case against me is." And the
 elders said, "That is his complaint, is it? The chief
 of the Kuka hut was in the wrong."

XVI

THE TORTOISE AND THE ANTELOPE

I. A TORTOISE and an Antelope once had an 539
 argument. The Antelope said, "Tortoise, are you
 able to run along with me?" And the Tortoise
 replied, "Yes, I am able." Then the Tortoise went
 off to tell his companions, and he said, "We have
 had a discussion with the Antelope (about running),
 and he says we must race together, and you, my
 friends, come along, you must give me your assist-
 ance." And the Tortoise began to place them in a
 long line, and they reached to the plain which they
 had agreed upon [as the scene of the race]. Then
 the Antelope said, "Tortoise, come on, let us begin
 to run." Then the Antelope set off as hard as he
 could; he runs and runs, and at length calls out,
 "Hallo, Tortoise!" And the Tortoise replied far
 in front, "Hallo! I passed long ago." And the
 Antelope set off again, and again called out, "Where

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178 blame the Europeans for it; but it remains part of the distinctive cultural heritage of the tribe.

182 As we might expect, notions of this kind do not provide sanctioned standards of conduct nor ideal patterns towards which Ngoni strive. They may be used to explain or justify a state of affairs, as we have seen, but they do not directly determine action. An individual who departs from traditional custom, in these terms, is not necessarily censured. Indeed, men who are knowledgeable about the glorious past do not follow traditional ways any more than do less-well-informed people. According to tradition the Ngoni are a virilocal people, yet if a man goes to live with his wife's relatives his own kinsfolk cannot force him to return by appeal to this virilocal tradition.

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[606] Traditionally a man avoids his mother-in-law. Yet I once saw an aristocratic man, a great authority on traditional history, on leave from work sitting on a verandah chatting with his mother-in-law. I said to him, "I thought a man should avoid his mother-in-law." He laughed and replied, "Yes, so he should. This behaviour is disgusting, and as soon as I come to live here permanently I shall see that customs are properly followed."

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619 In certain situations the Fort Jameson-Ngoni appear as a tribe in contrast to other tribes. The tribe is an administrative unit, with its own chiefs, its own area and sometimes its own District Officer. Representatives from each tribe in the region sit together to form the Native Urban Court and the Provincial Advisory Council. The Ngoni representatives on these bodies tend to present distinctively Ngoni views to contrast with the views of their colleagues. Thus there may be a discussion on wills. There is an Ngoni view, a Cewa view, and so on. The Ngoni representative repeats the old story about bridewealth, virilocal residence, the rights of the eldest son, and these are recorded as being the Ngoni custom in the matter. Even when discussing such an apparently modern issue as wills, the tendency is to go back to this mythical past. It is in terms of this past, in reality as well as in myth, that Ngoni are different from their neighbours. In the present, as contrasted with Europeans, Ngoni and Cewa are much the same. Ngoni pay bridewealth in the same way as the English eat roast beef. It is a national characteristic, but one located in the minds of men rather than observable in their actions or their aspirations. Instead of the scarifications and totemic observances which distinguish their neighbours, Ngoni express their tribal identity by having distinctive customs which, conveniently, need not be followed.

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184 In the Native Urban Court a similar process appears to operate, but here, unlike at the Advisory Council, there is a greater need to come to grips with real situations which require action, and tribal distinctiveness is tempered with practical reality. In the purely Ngoni Native Courts appeals are made to traditional practice in a different way. The courts are required by the Administration to follow tribal custom and people know that the courts are bound in this way. In fact, however, the courts have continually to deal with new situations and to make decisions which are unprecedented. This is done

586 and inform her that she is divorced. If the wife has committed adultery,
 586 the husband can take the case to court. If the adultery is proved he is
 684 usually awarded £3 damages against his wife and £3 against the co-
 respondent, and the woman is divorced. On the other hand, a woman
 can seek a divorce in the courts on the grounds of desertion or cruelty.
 The court will award a divorce if the desertion or cruelty is proved,
 but may also rule that the woman must pay £3 to her husband's family.

If a man does not wish to divorce his adulterous wife, the court will
 award him damages of £1. 10s. against his wife and £1. 10s. against
 the co-respondent. In adultery cases in which a divorce is granted the
 damages awarded against the woman are often met by the co-respondent,
 who then marries the woman, but where there is no divorce the
 woman will appeal to her father or brothers to help her pay her
 husband.

If a woman runs away from her husband there is nothing that the
 husband can do to force her back, and if methods of conciliation fail,
 he has little hope of redress, except in cases of seduction or abduction.
 If the woman refuses to rejoin her husband the court may award
 damages against her, but such a marriage usually ends in adultery on
 the part of the woman and a divorce on that ground.

586 It has been observed by District Officers that divorce is not so
 593 frequent among the Ngoni as compared with their Cewa neighbours.
 Nevertheless, divorce must be considered as a frequent occurrence
 among the Ngoni, and is so regarded by the people themselves. There
 is a maxim that a man ought to rely on his brothers, not on his wife,
 and one informant remarked: 'Never trust your wife; perhaps to-
 morrow you will divorce her.'

The Wife's Mother

● 606 The tensions between the two groups linked by a marriage find
 their most formal expression in the attitude prescribed for a man to
 his wife's mother. While a woman can speak to her parents-in-law
 and enter their house, a man cannot do so. In his contacts with his
 father-in-law he must be quiet and reserved, and although face-to-
 face contact is not considered shocking, it should be as rare as possible.
 But a man must go out of his way to avoid his mother-in-law, and this
 injunction is in the main observed in practice. The avoidance is
 usually phrased in terms of a prohibition on the entry into the hut of
 the mother-in-law. A man who has to pass by this hut will normally
 go round the back of it.

THE FAMILY

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It is therefore appropriate that, when a man has proved himself to be a good son-in-law by fulfilling his obligations to his parents-in-law and by treating their daughter well, he is invited to make a formal entry into the house of his wife's parents. This is the occasion for much dancing and speech-making. The salient features of the ceremony¹ are as follows. The married couple come in procession with their relatives and neighbours from their village to the village of the woman's parents. The procession is led by the eldest child of the couple carrying a knoberry. They dance in the cattle byre and then enter the hut of the woman's parents. Here after some drinking and dancing, during which the visitors keep themselves more or less to one side of the hut and leave the other side for the relatives of the woman, there is a ceremony in which a gift is offered by the man's people to the woman's people, and in which a female relative of the man takes a spoonful of boiled maize from a dish and then spits it out again. She is followed by a female relative of the woman, who does the same. The two people who do this are close relatives of the couple, sometimes sisters. The knoberry stays in the hut overnight, and the next day the man's parents come and they formally enter the woman's parents' hut. The couple also come into the hut with their friends and the woman's mother offers beer to the man in the usual way by kneeling at his feet and drinking to him. He then drinks from the bowl, and it is passed round for everyone in the hut to drink.

The completion of this ceremony marks the setting aside of the avoidance taboos to the greatest extent allowed. The man may still not sit on the same mat as his mother-in-law but he can now talk to her and can come into her hut. It is, as it were, the final reward of the good son-in-law and marks the end of the series of adjustments in relative status that began with the small gifts that the man made before the legalization payment was fixed. The hostility between the two families has been reduced by carrying out through the years their reciprocal rights and duties, and their common interest in the children of the marriage is symbolized by the eldest child who leads the procession from one village to the other.

Even on such a family occasion as this, village, as distinct from kinship, ties remain important. At one ceremony I attended the leader of the first delegation from the man's village was described as being just an important woman in the village and not related to him. [621]

¹ *Magonia*. Cf. the Zulu verb *ala-agonia*, to enter another person's house (Calman).

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Grandparents

603 Children on weaning are often sent to their grandmothers to be brought up. The payments made in the marriage do not seem to influence either the choice of grandmother or whether or not the child stays with its parents. A child is sometimes sent to an old woman not its grandmother but related in some other way who lives in the same or a nearby village and who already has a brood of children to look after. This separation from the parents may occur whether the grandmother lives in the same or in a different village from the parents. Grandparents, and in particular that grandmother by whom a child was brought up, become confidants in later life. It is to her husband's grandparents that a wife complains if her husband does not fulfil his sexual obligations, while it is through the bride's grandparents that the groom should approach her parents when arranging the marriage.

• [606] The husband must avoid his wife's mother, but his wife's mother's mother and his wife's father's mother can sit on the same side of the house as he does, as though they were themselves married to him. When he is drunk a man can fondle the breasts of his grandmother, whereas to attempt to do this to his mother would be regarded as shocking.

593 While it is the grandmothers who intervene in the beginning of a matrimonial quarrel when the dispute is still an affair of the village, it is the parents of the couple, or if the parents are dead or senile the brothers, who will go to court to support them when the dispute has moved to the judicial zone of activity. Women seeking divorce on [586] grounds of desertion get their fathers to speak in their favour, while the absentee husband, who may be lost in Southern Rhodesia, will be represented by his father or his brother. Occasionally a father may give his support to his daughter-in-law rather than to his son if the son has annoyed his father as well as his wife.

593 Outsiders cannot intervene in the disputes within a family, although they may be called in to give their support to one side or the other. 591 In particular the family of a man will not themselves take the initiative 578 in bringing an action against his wife, however strongly they may rally to his support in a dispute where the initiative is taken by the wife's people. This principle applies even in cases of incest. For example, a [684] woman whose husband was away in Southern Rhodesia slept with her father. The husband's brothers wrote to Southern Rhodesia to tell him what was happening, but as in his reply he did not instruct them to take proceedings in the matter, nothing more was done about it.